

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE
FROM THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND CONDUCT
UNITED STATES SENATE
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1965

RE: SENATE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND CONDUCT
HOLDS ORGANIZATION MEETING

The Select Committee on Standards and Conduct of the United States Senate held a meeting today to organize and consider its purposes. Senator John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) was elected Chairman, and Senator Wallace F. Bennett (R-Utah) was elected Vice Chairman.

Authorized by a Senate Resolution last year, the Committee consists of Senators Stennis and Bennett and of Senators Mike Monroney (D-Okla.), John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.), Eugene J. McCarthy (D-Minn.), and James B. Pearson (R-Kan.).

After it was organized, the Committee proceeded to appoint Benjamin R. Fern of McLean, Virginia, as Chief Counsel. The new professional staff member, who is 44 years old and a lawyer, recently retired from the Navy where he was a Captain.

Spelled out in the Resolution establishing the Committee are the following responsibilities:

Receive complaints and investigate allegations of improper conduct which may reflect upon the Senate, violations of law, and violations of rules and regulations of the Senate, relating to the conduct of individuals in the performance of their duties as members of the Senate, or as officers or

employees of the Senate, and make appropriate findings of fact and conclusions with respect thereto.

Recommend to the Senate disciplinary action to be taken with respect to such violations which the Committee shall determine to have occurred.

Accord to the individuals concerned due notice and opportunity for hearing.

Recommend to the Senate such additional rules or regulations as the Committee shall determine to be necessary or desirable to insure proper standards of conduct by members of the Senate, and by officers and employees of the Senate, in the performance of their duties and the discharge of their responsibilities.

Report violations of any law to the proper Federal and State authorities.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Senator Stennis and Senator Bennett issued the following joint statement:

Senator Stennis stated that he regards the Committee's role as the preservation of the good name of the Senate. The Senate's reputation must be protected against any improper action of an individual Senator, or officer or employee of the Senate, he added.

While not a legislative committee, the Select Committee is authorized to recommend to the Senate any legislative measures which the Committee may consider necessary for the effective discharge of its duties. In addition, the Committee is authorized to utilize the services, information and facilities of the executive branch of the Government.

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Senator Stennis, who is also Chairman of the Senate Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee, emphasized that under our system of government a Senator is primarily accountable to the people of his State. The ultimate responsibility for the moral integrity of the Senate, then, rests with the electorate of the country. No committee can alter the process of selection of a Senator or intervene in the responsibility of a Senator to his constituency.

This does not mean that the Committee feels itself helpless to protect the Senate as an institution. The Committee accepts the duty of attempting to express its understanding of the standards of conduct in the field of Senatorial responsibility which the people of the United States are entitled to expect of Senators and their staffs, and the officers and employees of the Senate.

In more concrete terms, the Committee expects to first take the time necessary to prepare a body of principles against which to measure any allegedly unethical or unlawful conduct and to thus be in a position to then dispose of complaints fairly; however, if a specific complaint is received in the meantime, the Committee is prepared to take action.